

GOSPEL OF THOMAS - AN ANCIENT TESTIMONY TO THE JESUS MYTH

In the book of Wisdom and in Proverbs, Wisdom is talked about like she was a person. Paul called Heaven, Jerusalem our mother. So personification is a popular device in the Bible which firmly imbeds it in Jewish and Christian tradition.

At Nag Hammadi in Egypt in 1945, the ancient gospel of Thomas was found. It is a collection of sayings which allegedly came from Jesus. Fragments of this gospel written before 200 AD were uncovered before that. The sayings of the gospel look more primitive and therefore older than the related ones in the canonical gospels. We can tell for they are simpler and seem to show little knowledge of the context of the sayings that resemble the gospels. The original draft of the gospel is possibly first century (page 125, The Nag Hammadi Library in English).

This gospel says that Jesus was not a real person but a symbolic teacher of wisdom. The living Jesus was a symbol just like the Devil is a symbol of wisdom for the Church of Satan in San Francisco.

The notion of God becoming a human being, Jesus, is certainly rejected. It implies the body must be sacred. But the Thomas Jesus hates the body, "I do marvel at how this great wealth has come to dwell in this poverty!" (28.3). He hates the material universe too: "Whoever has come to know the world has found a corpse" (56.1). This Jesus is at core different from the standard Christian Jesus. It is such a different Jesus from the gospel one that either one or both of them is a fabrication.

The first saying says, "Whoever finds the interpretation of these sayings will not experience death". So they all have spiritual meaning and if you think hard enough you can break the code. We have broken the code. We will see that the author must have been totally sure that Jesus never existed historically for he takes it for granted that we should be able to see that he is saying that so he shows that he believes that any open-minded and knowledgeable person out there will agree with him. He presupposes that there are many disbelievers in the existence of Jesus out there. He knows of plenty. He knows of evidence but he does not see the need to draw attention to it.

The gospel can be interpreted as monistic, that all things are just the one God, but we need not go that far and remember the invalid interpretation is the simplest. We need not think it envisages an undivided God without parts which is the creation so nobody can say that the reason it has an impersonal Jesus is because it follows a monistic impersonal God. The god of monism or pantheism is impersonal for he is stones as well as people so he cannot be a person.

Jesus is the leader of the disciples and their spiritual director. He could be a mental image like the god Hermes was to his fans that God used to give people visions and revelations inside their heads in their imagination.

Jesus said that the person who will drink from his mouth will become Jesus himself. If Jesus is a symbol for spiritual insight then the person who achieves spiritual insight makes it a part of him and kind of becomes it when he follows it. It may seem that to drink from his mouth means hear the word of God and absorb it. What it really means is to drink spiritual power or a life-force out of Jesus so that you become Jesus. Jesus then is a force not a person. He is not a man. The human Jesus never lived.

Jesus says he is all things and if you break a stone you find him inside (77). This assertion came after he said that that kingdom of God is like a precious pearl and since the kingdom is enlightenment he shows he is on about gaining wisdom. Then after the assertion he said that those who come to him look for truth. So when he said that we can break a stone to find him he meant that he was nature and we hear his word through nature and not through a man. There is spiritual insight in all things or all things are the power of wisdom. So Jesus is a metaphor for nature and not a man. Obviously, Jesus could not be all things if he were a real person. I can't become a stone as well as a person if I am conscious only of being a person.

Jesus told his followers to make James the Righteous the true leader if he leaves. Jesus admits that he is the boss. But shortly afterwards, he tells Thomas that he is not his master and that he only thinks he is his master because he had not seen the light and is drunk in his ignorance. So if Jesus is not his real master and yet a master then Jesus does not exist and he is only a symbol for the mental force from God that leads to psychological insight or the mystical illumination of gnosis. James was named as the brother of the Lord so the gospel is telling us he was the brother only in the sense that he was close to the Lord for the Lord is not a real man. Brother of the Lord is a honorary title. There is much evidence that the gospel is telling the truth and has inside knowledge of early Christianity.

The author evinces his great regard for Jesus when he says that Jesus wants us to follow James the Righteous after Jesus is gone. He is saying that Jesus ought to be listened to. Jesus is a force that will speak through the person of James in the

future. Following James is following Jesus because Jesus will become the incarnation of Jesus. This implies that Jesus is a spiritual force from God that is to communicate with man through the imagination. Jesus is saying that ongoing revelation is necessary and he only gives that revelation through a person.

Jesus criticises the apostles for referring to dead prophets instead of the living one in front of them which is himself (52). Does this tell us that the living Jesus is a man of flesh and blood? If the dead men were prophets then a real live Jesus would have regarded them as voices like his own, he would not have chastised the apostles. But if Jesus were only a personification in the imagination through which God speaks it would be preferable for people to go directly to him instead of to other people. The verse really refutes the notion of a literal Jesus. A Jesus who speaks last week would be in the same boat as a dead prophet for his word is in the past. But a non-literal Jesus would speak and remind and be with you all the time so his word would come first. The living one just means the force that reveals life and salvation for Jesus made it clear that it was mystical communion with God who is nature that saves so stones and men are not important but the divinity in them. So when he said he meant himself as the road to salvation he was not talking about his human self but the divinity inside. He was not referring to being human at all. If Jesus was a divine force speaking through a medium like say James like a spirit would then how does that square with the message of the gospel that each person has to get knowledge about Jesus on his own? Jesus speaks through James but you cannot learn from it unless you experience mystically what Jesus is saying. So to the person who does have the magical experience it is just hearing words but not the import of the words.

Jesus proclaimed that it was for James that Heaven and earth were created. This would have to be truer of Jesus than James if Jesus is a real person. So Jesus is not real and James is real. James will be the symbolic Jesus' main mouthpiece after Jesus ceases to talk to the apostles. Think about this. What if Heaven and earth were made for James because he would be the only spiritual medium through which Jesus would speak? When Jesus leaves James, James will be boss. This has to be the correct understanding. Remember how the gospel condemned listening to prophets from the past. Then it says that we must listen to Jesus. Jesus then was not a prophet in the past at any time. He is a spiritual force that we commune with right now. It is the present voice not the past that matters. Thomas rejects any other gospel but Thomas for Thomas says we must listen to Jesus now and feel him inspiring us. Gospels with any different message and with stories of Jesus are not to be depended on.

Since Heaven and earth were made for James it suggests that James alone will give the pure word of God. This also is a hint that there was no historical Jesus. It is definitely a hint of great age for the saying about James is so strange and unnecessary there is no other explanation but that the saying was created when James was alive.

When it is James alone, Jesus is denying the gospel portrait of a saviour who came for all and who speaks to all by the power of the Holy Spirit and who had loads of followers. This is another indication of a pre-gospel origin because it ties in with the earliest strata that express the fact that the predecessors of the gospels did not have Jesus as a Palestinian superstar. A fact that was too well covered up to have been thought up later. And it was a fact for it was commonsense that nobody like Jesus would have been tolerated for five minutes by the authorities.

Salome asked Jesus who he was when he came up on her couch and ate from her table (61). Jesus told her that he was the one who exists from the undivided. God is the undivided and God is all therefore he who exists outside God is not a real person but a myth, a symbol.

Now it may be objected that a real Jesus could be used as a symbol and image and this means that the gospel is not challenging his real existence.

This is incorrect. It is not likely that a person will do that without making it clear that he does not intend his symbol to represent the true Jesus.

Why would anybody pick out sayings of a real Jesus that had no relevance for him and put them in this book in the mouth of a symbolic Jesus? There is no reason and no way it could happen! Jesus was a symbol that was taken too seriously by some that they turned him into a man.

Jesus said that Adam was not worthy of the apostles which was why he died (85). This hints that Jesus himself never died. When Jesus told the apostles that when they see a man who was not born of woman they will know that he is their father and they must worship this man (15). He means God and himself as the manifestation of God. He is saying he is not born of woman meaning he is not a real man or a real person. Since they have to know God in a mystical experience they have to know that same way that the man did not have a human origin. Since salvation is partly delivery from human ways of thinking and takes you to the abstract the man is not a man at all for a man is a block to salvation. Jesus means personified force by man not man the material being. He demands worship so he is saying he is a personified force as well.

Jesus says that only the solitary will be saved (75) indicating that depending on Jesus if he was a man or on apostles is wrong. You only use them to learn that you must do it on your own or as examples. This is a denial that the death or

resurrection of Jesus saves us and the gospels which have a social Jesus.

Saying 30 claims that Jesus will be with the gods who seem to be enlightened human beings. He says that where there are three gods there are gods but where there is less he will be with them. This implies that very few can be saved by Jesus. Jesus is saying that he can get nobody to rest in. That is, there is nobody who fully accepts his principles.

In saying 86, Jesus says that foxes and birds have to rest but he has nowhere to rest. Since the gospel claims to have an oblique interpretation Jesus must mean he has nobody to rest in. This Jesus who kept his ministry quiet fits the evidence from the first century that Christianity was not founded by a popular well-known person.

So we have found a first century witness that Jesus was not a real person but a myth in the sense of a meaningful symbol - a vehicle of expression.